

CLAIMS:

- Sub B1
1. A method of acquiring and playing digital content comprising:
 acquiring a physical electronic key containing a key code from a key provider;
 acquiring locked digital content from a content provider, the digital content
 5 being marked with an unlock code associated with the key code; and
 entering the locked digital content into a playing device that reads the key
 code and determines whether the key code is associated with the
 unlock code, the device being enabled to unlock and play the digital
 content if the key code is associated with the unlock code.
 - 10 2. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of acquiring the physical electronic
 key includes providing the key provider with user identification information for use
 by the key provider in establishing a user account, the user account including the user
 identification information and the key code.
 - 15 3. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of acquiring the locked digital content
 includes providing the content provider with the key code for use by the content
 provider in validating the key code prior to providing the locked digital content.
 - 20 4. The method of claim 1, wherein the locked digital content is locked by
 encryption and unlocked by decryption.
 5. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of acquiring the physical electronic
 key includes accessing a first web site of the key provider and requesting the physical
 25 electronic key via the first web site, and wherein the step of acquiring the locked
 digital content includes accessing a second web site of the content provider and
 requesting the digital content via the second web site.
 6. The method of claim 1, wherein the physical electronic key is acquired at no
 30 charge, and wherein the digital content is purchased.
 7. A method of managing digital rights comprising:

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11. The method of claim 7, wherein the locked digital content is locked by encryption and unlocked by decryption.

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electronic key and determines that the key code is an unlock code.

method of claim 13, further including establishing a user identification information and the key code for the requesting user prior to providing the physical electronic key.

method of claim 13, further including obtaining and requesting user prior to the step of applying the unlock code.

method of claim 3, wherein the physical electronic key includes respective wireless transceivers for communicating with the playing device.

digital rights management system, comprising:

- a physical electronic key containing a key code and providing the key code to the user;
- means for providing locked digital content to the requesting user, the content being marked with an unlock code associated with the key code; and
- a playing device for receiving the locked digital content, the key code, and determining whether the key code is an unlock code, the playing device being enabled to unlock the digital content if the key code is associated with the unlock code.

system of claim 17, wherein the physical electronic key includes means for communicating the key code to the playing device.

system of claim 17, wherein the means for providing the digital content to the requesting user includes a web site on the Internet.

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30 19. The system of claim 17, wherein the means for providing the locked digital content to the requesting user includes a web site on the Internet.

20. The system of claim 19, wherein the means for providing the locked digital content secures validation of the key code prior to providing the locked digital content.

5 21. The system of claim 17, further including means for providing the physical electronic key, and establishing a user account including user identification information and the key code for the requesting user prior to providing the key.

10 22. The system of claim 21, wherein the means for providing the physical electronic key includes a web site on the Internet.

23. A digital rights management system, comprising:
a physical electronic key containing a key code;
locked digital content marked with an unlock code associated with the key
15 code; and
a playing device for receiving the locked digital content, receiving the key code, and determining whether the key code is associated with the unlock code, the playing device being enabled to unlock and play the
20 digital content if the key code is associated with the unlock code.

24. The system of claim 23, wherein the digital content is locked by encryption and unlocked by decryption.

25 25. The system of claim 23, wherein the physical electronic key and the playing device include means for communicating the key code to the playing device.